



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

September 10, 2001

Contact: Patrick Lacefield 240-777-7939 or Jean Arthur 240-777-7934

Hears from state & county, adds mental health consumers to consult panel...

COUNCIL'S BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE ON MENTAL HEALTH BEGINS WORK

The 11-member "Blue Ribbon Task Force on Mental Health" appointed by the County Council in July to examine the County's mounting crisis in mental health services began work this week, hearing from state and county officials and adding two mental health consumers as consultants.

The panel of distinguished experts, charged with the responsibility of impartially examining the current system and suggesting changes to better serve County residents, heard from the state Mental Hygiene Administration and from Chuck Short, director of the county Health & Human Services Department. The task force also heard from Council President Blair Ewing, who has taken the lead in highlighting the county's mental health crisis and fighting for needed changes.

"We have made a good start, but have our work cut out for us," said Dr. Wayne S. Fenton of the National Institute of Mental Health, who is vice chair of the panel. "This will be a challenging task to accomplish on a tight timetable. Our job is to take a critical and comprehensive look at the public's mental health needs and how and where the system is falling short in providing a humane safety net for our most vulnerable citizens."

"We are happy that Randy Bosin and Carolyn Figard, who are consumers of mental health services, have joined our work as consultants and we welcome their input," added task force chair Kevin Dwyer of the National Mental Health Association.

"The system as it now exists is not working for many County residents," said Council President Blair Ewing. "We have to do better and we have to get the state of Maryland to fulfill its responsibility to fund an improved system. We cannot – and will not – turn our backs on those most in need of a helping hand."

The panel is slated to make a report of its full findings by February 1, 2002. It is expected to hold a public session in the fall to garner perspectives on the crisis from the community.

###

N
E
W
S

R
E
L
E
A
S
E